DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 234 064 TM 830 530

AUTHOR Morgan, William R.
TITLE New Data Available for the National Longitudinal Surveys.
PUB DATE 14 Apr 83
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (67th, Montreal, Quebec, April 11-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Records; Aptitude Tests; Cohort Analysis; *Data; Environmental Influences; Human Capital; Institutional Characteristics; Interdisciplinary Approach; *Labor Economics; Labor Market; *Longitudinal Studies; *National Surveys; Secondary Education; *Youth
IDENTIFIERS Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery; Comprehensive Employment and Training Act; *National Longitudinal Surveys

ABSTRACT

The National Longitudinal surveys (NLS) of Labor Market Behavior have been conducted by the Center for Human Resource Research at Ohio State University and supported by the Department of Labor since 1966. In this paper, data from the fifth and newest NLS cohort, a national cohort of 12,686 youth who were aged 14-21 in 1979, are discussed. Approximately 11,400 young men and women from all 50 states and the District of Columbia made up the civilian sample; an additional 1,300 youth in the armed forces were selected for interviewing under funding from the Department of Defense and the Services. The interdisciplinary nature of the Center's research staff, the interests of the agencies who helped fund the survey, and an interest in maintaining comparability with the first four cohorts in terms of human capital and other sociometric variables, labor market experience variables, and environmental variables are reflected in the survey's content. Three additional data sets on school characteristics, student transcripts, and scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery were collected for use with the longitudinal interviews. The 6,500 variables represented in these NLS youth tapes present a challenge to educational researchers using the tapes to develop meaningful longitudinal research problems. (LC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED234064

NEW DATA AVAILABLE FOR THE NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEYS*

William R. Morgan

Center for Human Resource Research
The Ohio State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W.R. Morgan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

TM 830 530

*Prepared for presentation at the symposium of the Special Interest Group on Longitudinal Research, American Eduational Research Association annual meetings, April 14, 1983, Montreal.

New Data Available for the National Longitudinal Surveys

The National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Behavior have been conducted by the Center for Human Resource Research and supported by the Department of Labor since 1966. At the present time each of the surveys of the four older cohorts--the mature men, mature women, young men, and young women--includes from 11 to 12 waves of interviews. To date these are the surveys best known to the social science research community, having provided data for several hundred articles, mostly but not exclusively in the field of labor economics. These NLS surveys are frequently called the "Parnes' data," in recognition of the founder of the project and its principal investigator until 1980, Professor Herbert Parnes.

What I wish to discuss today are data from the fifth and newest NLS cohort, a national cohort of 12,686 youth who were aged 14-21 in 1979. Unlike the previous cohorts for which data collection was undertaken by the Bureau of the Census, the data for the youth cohort have been collected by the National Opinion Research Center under a subcontract from the Center for Human Resource Research. This arrangement has permitted increased flexibility in the design of the interview schedule, producing what should prove to be a highly valuable set of data of even broader applicability than the previous surveys.

One of the primary missions of the Center at Ohio State has been to disseminate these data and assist the research community in their use. In the fall of 1982 tapes containing 6,500 variables from the first three years of data collection became available. Currently data from the 1982 interview wave are undergoing preliminary analysis and cleaning, and are scheduled for release in the Fall of 1983. The 1983

interview wave is in the field, and the interview schedule for the sixth and possibly final 1984 wave is being pretested. There is a reasonable possibility the cohort may continue to be interviewed on an abbreviated basis through 1989.

The national probability sample includes youth from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The sample consists of a civilian sample of approximately 5,700 young women and 5,700 young men, with an overrepresentation of blacks, Hispanics, and disadvantaged whites. An additional 1,300 youth serving in the Armed Forces were selected for interviewing under funding from the Department of Defense and the Services. One of the principal strengths of the survey has been the low attrition rate. Of the original 12,686 respondents, 12,124 were located and interviewed in 1982. Approximately 11,600 respondents have been interviewed in all of the first four waves. Considering the high geographic mobility of today's youth, this is no small accomplishment.

The content of the survey reflects several competing and overlapping interests. First is the interdisciplinary nature of the Center research staff. Those who assemble questions for the interview schedule include persons from the fields of economics, sociology, psychology, and education. A second source of diversity has been the several policy foci of the survey. Of primary interest has been the Department of Labor's need to evaluate the expanded employment and training programs for youth legislated by the 1977 amendments to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. The Department of Defense has been interested in issues related to the enlistment potential of youth for the all-volunteer armed forces. The National Institute of Health has funded questions first on juvenile delinquency, alcohol and

drug use, and more recently on fertility and teenage pregnancy. A third source of content for the survey has been the effort to maintain comparability with the four original cohorts in three broad areas of questions--human capital and other socioeconomic variables, labor market experience variables, and environmental variables. Boradly stated, these three areas of questions when repeated annually permit the construction of a complete education, work, and locational history of each respondent.

Of special interest to educational researchers are three additional data sets which have been collected for use in conjunction with the longitudinal interviews. In 1980 mail questionnaires were sent to the principal's office at each respondent's last high school attended. The first part collected basic data on the composition of the student body, instructional staff, and school physical facilities. The second collected all available standardized achievement and intelligence test score data for each respondent. While the first part produced a relatively complete and useful school characteristics data set, the second part produced usable test score data for only about 20 percent of the respondents. Fortunately two subsequent data collection efforts improved these data considerably.

In 1980 the National Center for Vocational Education with the cooperation of the Center for Human Resource Research also subcontracted to the National Opinion Research Center in order to collect the complete high school transcript record of each NLS youth who was a high school graduate. This mail and telephone survey produced transcript data for 6,591 respondents. These data include annual attendance records, any available PSAT, SAT, or ACT scores, and the grade and credits received

for each courses taken in grades 9-12, after conversion to the standard Carnegie credit-unit system. Each course was identified by a separate course code within a larger set of 30 possible subject areas. Unfortunately only about 3,200 cases contain complete transcript data, although in conjunction with the interview and other available data this number has permitted several fertile analyses. The Vocational Eduation Center has studied in detail the pattern of vocational course enrollments, developing a refined category system which promises to be a valuable addition to the standard three-track curriculum placement variable. Another unpublished analysis recently completed at the Center for Human Resource Research found that youth from the college preparatory curriculum on the average spent two-thirds of their high school day in academic courses, whereas vocational and general curriculum youth spent only half their school day in academic courses. By academic courses I mean the five basic subject areas of English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language.

But the most remarkable addition to the NLS youth data occurred in the summer and fall of 1980. The Department of Defense decided to use the NLS youth sample to create new national norms for the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), the basic screening test used on potential enlistees. The National Opinion Research Center offered each NLS respondent fifty dollars to spend a half-day at one of over 400 test sites in order to complete this ten-test battery. Over 94 percent of the civilian youth sample completed the battery, and 90 percent of the military sample. The tests range from standard academic tests of vocabulary, reading, and math skills to more vocationally-oriented tests of mechanical comprehension and auto and shop information. My analyses

using the three academic tests as standardized measures of school performance have generated results very similar to ones using the corresponding achievement tests in the High School and Beyond data. While these scores are only available for any one youth at one point in time, keep in mind that for the cohort as a whole the battery measures educational achievement, or aptitude if you will, across the full range of educational progress. For example, one might infer the significance of dropping out of high school by noting the finding that on the academic tests the NLS high school dropouts scored approximately two standard deviations below currently-enrolled NLS college students. After approximately a year and a half of analysis by Professor Bock and his associates at the University of Chicago, the ASVAB data were released to the Center in 1982. These test data, in conjunction with the school transcripts and principals' questionnaire data, have been merged with the three waves of interview data. This is why the public use tapes now available contain 6,500 variables.

Some researchers have complained that the presence of so many variables makes the NLS youth tapes difficult or even impossible to use. For researchers without a well-defined problem this can certainly be true; those of us who have worked with the data strongly recommend against a fishing expedition approach. The real challenge to educational researchers who want to make effective use of the tapes is to develop meaningful longitudinal research problems. For example, sociologists probably have already exhausted the need for further research on the educational and occupational attainment process. The detailed data available on the simultaneous work and educational experiences of the youth, however, invite a detailed analysis of the

degree of contemporary interrelatedness of these two domains. It may be that the phrase, "the transition from school to work," overstates their separateness in time. To an important degree career initiation activities may coincide with rather than follow the completion of one's formal education.

I close this paper with a brief look at the data, as presented in Table 1. The cohort is divided into three age groups, based on their 1979 age. Within each of these three age cohorts, the sample is further divided into four levels of educational attainment--high school enrollee (E), high school dropout (D), terminal high school graduate (G), and college student (C). This breakdown by age and level of education is presented for each of the first four years of the survey. It reveals the expected and relatively ordered pattern of educational progression of the cohort. It further shows that in 1982 the youngest third of the cohort has the same distribution of educational attainment as the older, middle third had in 1979. Similarly, the middle age group in 1982 has the same educational attainment distribution as the oldest age group had in 1979. These similarities, of course, reflect the fact that as the different age groups move simultaneously through time, they follow each other in educational attainment. For the sake of enlarging one's sample for a cross-sectional analysis, one might want to use variables measured in 1982 for the 14 to 16 year olds, in conjunction with the same variable measured in 1979 for the 17 to 19 year olds.

Table 1 Educational Progression from 1979 to 1982 of the NLS Youth Cohort, Within Three Age Groups

Age in 1979	14-16				17-19				20-22			
Educational level	(Percentage of youth in each educational category)											
	E	D	G	C	E	D	G	C	E	D	G	C
Interview year:												
1979	97%	0	0	3	42	14	18	26	1	14	35	51
1980	91	7	1	1	14	16	29	41	0	13	35	52
1981	69	12	7	12	2	16	32	51	0	12	34	54
1982	39	15	19	28	0	14	32	53	0	12	33	55
n		(3,844)				(4,377)				(3,376)		

Legend: E = high school enrollee; D = high school dropout; G = terminal high school graduate; C = some college.

Table 2 Content by Section of the First Three Interview Schedules

1979 Questionnaire

Section #	
1	Family Background
2	Marital History
3	Fertility
4	Regular Schooling
5	Jobs/Pay
6	Knowledge of and Experiences With World of Work
7	Military
8	Current Labor Force Status (CPS)
9	Jobs
10	Jobs
11	Last Job
12	Early Work Experience
13	Government Training
14	Other Training
15	On Periods When R Was Not at Work
16	On Health
17	On Significant Others
18	Residences
19	Rotter Scale
20	Family Attitudes

1980 Questionnaire

Section #	
1	On Family
2	Marital History
3	Fertility
4	Regular Schooling
5	On School Discipline
6	Military Service
7	Current Labor Force Status (CPS)
8	On Jobs
9	Periods When R Not Working or in Military
10	On Government Training
11	Other Training
12	Degrees, Certificates, Licenses
13	On Health
14	On Self-Esteem
15	Delinquency and Drugs
16	Reported Police Contacts
17	On Assets and Income
18	On Aspirations and Expectations
19	Locating Information

1981 Questionnaire

Section #	
1	I.D.
2	Marital History
3	Fertility
4	Regular Schooling
5	Military
6	On Current Labor Force Status (CPS)
7	On Jobs
8	Periods When R Not Working or in Military
9	On Government Training
10	Other Training
11	On Health
12	On Assets and Income
13	Time Spent Working
14	Time Spent in Regular School
15	Time Spent in Government Training
16	Time Spent in Other Training
17	Job Search
18	Time Spent Sleeping and Watching TV
19	Household Chores and Child Care
20	On Aspirations and Expectations
21	Locating Information